

Born in 1835 – when Gregory XVI (the sixteenth) was pope ... Andrew Jackson was president of the United States ... and my own home state of Michigan was thinking about going to war with Ohio to reclaim the port of Toledo (we compromised, and our consolation prize was the Upper Peninsula which we took away from Wisconsin, and they didn't want to fight for) – Pope St. Pius X was the only 20th century pontiff to serve in many areas of the Church from the lowest to the highest. He began as a humble country assistant pastor and ended up as pope.

He was a reformer. And in his time as pope, he contributed to reforms of papal elections, seminary life, Eucharistic practice, sacred music, biblical studies, the breviary, catechesis, the Roman Curia, and Church Law.

His most striking reforms were in encouraging frequent Holy Communion, and the reception of First Communion at a young age. He is often remembered as the Eucharist pope, having stated:

Holy Communion is the shortest and safest way to Heaven.

He stood up to trends calling for “modernizations” – which at the time meant that the Church was to put all Her eggs in the basket of 19th century thought, ideas, and style.

Instead he promoted a wider use of chant and worked to implement both adult and child catechesis in parishes.

His papal motto was:

To restore all things in Christ.

Which he ardently worked to do, all with the help of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Aside from his work in reforming the Church, he was known for his personal holiness. Many miracles are attributed to him during his life. In one, he was holding a paralyzed child – who wriggled free and ran around the room. Another, where he encouraged a couple to hope and pray – and their child was cured of meningitis. And another, where a cardinal came to him with a terminal diagnosis, and the pope told him he would be fine.

He died in 1914, and on his tomb in the crypt of St. Peter's Basilica is inscribed:

*Born poor and humble of heart,
Undaunted champion of the Catholic faith,
Zealous to restore all things in Christ,
Crowned a holy life with a holy death.*

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, let us pray – through the intercession of Pope St. Pius X – for the spiritual qualities of humility, holiness, and zeal.